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PROGRAM The Bob Grant Show

STATION WMCA Radio

DATE January 20, 1983 4:10 P.M. CITY New York, N.Y.

SUBJECT Interview with Admiral Bobby Inman

BOB GRANT: If I were to tell you the name -- if I were to say the name Bobby Ray Inman, you'd probably think of a quarterback for the Alabama Crimson Tide, maybe, or the Georgia Bulldogs. It sounds like one of those Southeast Conference quarterbacks. They always have those names, you know, two names. Why have one when two will do?

But actually, Bobby Ray Inman is an admiral. Yeah, that's right. He became an admiral in the United States Navy. But even more incredible, Bobby Ray Inman was a CIA Deputy Director. I say was because he resigned last April. And there were bits and pieces of controversy over why he resigned. But the fact of the matter is, in spite of the Abbie Hoffmans and the Jerry Rubins and the Tom Haydens and the people like that, the Jane Fondas and the people like that, in spite of that, a sovereign nation has not only the right, but the duty to maintain a counterintelligence unit. In short, in order to survive, a nation must have a spy system. Call it espionage, call it counterespionage, call it any name you want, it is an honorable, necessary endeavor.

Had we not had it, we would not have beaten the Japanese and the Germans in World War II almost simultaneously in a relatively few short years. Had we not had it, General MacArthur would not have been able to make that brilliant landing at Inchon, which was never followed up the way it should have been. Had we not had it, the United States of America would not be even the vestigially free country it is today.

So make no mistake. After all, the brainwashing of the '60s and '70s, the lunacy of self-hatred, incredible mass psychosis of beating one's breast and saying, "My country is

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terrible. It's awful." It's incredible. That's what it is. It's absolutely.

And anyway, we need a spy system. But is ours really operating the way it should? What commends William Casey to be the head of the CIA, anyway?

We'll talk about that to Admiral Inman.

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GRANT: Admiral Bobby Inman, are you there, sir?

ADMIRAL BOBBY INMAN: I am here.

GRANT: I have so many questions that I would like to ask you. I probably -- I probably don't know where to begin, except I want to know, first of all, why you took the job you quit last April in the first place; if you were going to quit it, why you took it in the first place. That being what amounted to the number two man in the CIA, sir.

ADMIRAL INMAN: I took it only because of the direct personal request from the President and Mr. Casey that I at least take the job to help them get started. I had decided by 1980 I should retire, since I sat on a small pyramid of naval intelligence officers; and as long as I stayed on active duty, I blocked the opportunity for bright youngsters to come along and get their own chance to star.

Notwithstanding my desire to retire, Mr. Casey and the President both asked that if I was not willing to do the whole term, I at least help them get started. That's what I committed to do. But we also understood from the outset that it was going to be for less than two years.

So all of the stories later that made it appear as though I was walking off in anger could not have been further from the truth.

In my confirmation hearings, there was a little salting away that it was going to be a short tour. Only one journalist ever followed that up.

GRANT: Well, of course, journalists, being journalists, they like to make the most out of everything that happens. And indeed, there were all kinds of rumors. One that surfaced in the New York area a great deal was that you felt you were a professional and your boss was an amateur, and you found it difficult to take orders from an amateur.

ADMIRAL INMAN: [Unintelligible] not accurate. I had not illusions several years earlier about the prospect of a professional moving to head the intelligence services. We had a chance to get a charter in the late '70s. For a variety of reasons, it was not enacted. In the absence of that, now and for the foreseeable future, Presidents are going to choose as their Director of Central Intelligence someone they're personally knowledgeable of and comfortable with.

I think all the professionals understand that and are prepared to work with them and support them as long as they consider them competent.

In Bill Casey's own direct instance, we would never have gotten this Administration to sign up for a long-range rebuilding had he not been able to go directly to the President to get past all the blocking bureaucracy and get his approval. So if the professionals needed any demonstration of why it's advantageous to have someone as the DCI who has the President's direct ear, that specific approval for the rebuilding program brought it home.

GRANT: Admiral Inman, you say, then, that Bill Casey's doing a good job?

ADMIRAL INMAN: Anybody can be criticized for various areas of their job. Bill has -- does not have a long patience for dealing with the press, for dealing with any of the areas of the office that would probably give him a better image. But for the crux of the matter, where it really matters about how he's doing his job, I believe he will get very good marks from history, in looking back. I think he'll get those good marks from the job he did for rebuilding, but probably more importantly for revitalizing the way the country goes about developing its national estimates of events abroad. They drifted over a period of years into being encyclopedic historical kinds of studies, in large measure. Bill had no patience with that. He brought up a whole new approach, a fast-track approach to dealing with problems that are going to be relevant in the near term for policy decisions. And I think that will, on the long term, end up getting him strong plus marks for his tour as DCI.

GRANT: Admiral Inman, would you say that the CIA is in now, after a period in the '70s of almost being loathed by some Americans, being distrusted by some Americans, being feared by some Americans -- as a matter of fact, there are some Americans, to this day, that equate it -- at best, equate it with the KGB. I just don't understand it, but I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

ADMIRAL INMAN: I do indeed.

I think we are on the road back. In retrospect, looking back over the 30 years from in World War II to '75, the overall performance of the CIA has to come down as being very strong, contributing to the country's security. But along the way there were some missteps. There will always be great debate about covert action, changing other governments, reporting guerrilla movements, whether that's in the country's interest or not.

Setting that aside and dealing with its primary mission, the [unintelligible] foreign intelligence, a first-rate job in a great many areas.

But some of the abuses that surfaced in the '70s, and particularly the use of CIA and the other organizations to try to track whether or not there was foreign funds flowing to anti-war elements in the U.S., subjected not only CIA, but the FBI and the Defense organizations to a great deal of discredit.

GRANT: Yes.

ADMIRAL INMAN: As people began to suspect the only thing they did was spy on U.S. citizens. And that's been the hardest thing to shake in getting on with rebuilding the country's intelligence capabilities to be all that we need.

GRANT: Well, the pendulum, thankfully, has seemed to have swung back in a more rational territory, wouldn't you say?

ADMIRAL INMAN: Yes, sir. I believe it has.

GRANT: Let's turn to some more contemporary matters. For example, if I were to ask you, just off hand, who's the world's most dangerous leader, who would you say?

ADMIRAL INMAN: I'd be hard put to give you one. I'd give you two. Qaddafi of Libya and Kim Il Sung of North Korea.

GRANT: All right.

ADMIRAL INMAN: I think they are the two who are the most erratic and where one has to always at the prospect that they would stage an incident that could spread into a substantial conflict.

GRANT: All right. I just asked -- in case you just joined us or the noise on the line interfered with your hearing, Admiral Inman answered Qaddafi of Libya and North Korea's Kim Il Sung, and citing one of the major reasons for saying this the fact that they are both erratic, unpredictable.

And I think a lot of Americans would agree with you.

Although not too many years ago, when I would talk about Qaddafi, people didn't know what I was talking about.

We have the Administration responding to what Gromyko said in West Germany the other day, in which he said that if we did not -- that we had better not deploy any Pershing medium-range missiles in NATO countries, because if we did, they would drop the arms talks in Switzerland. What do you think we ought to do about that?

ADMIRAL INMAN: Well, first, I believe it's a bluff. It's a hard line. They clearly want to do anything to block the deployment of Pershing and the ground-launched cruise missiles to Europe because they see them as very sharply again redressing the balance, which went out of balance with their deploying their SS-20s. And there'll be a major campaign in the months ahead to try to portray the U.S. as the major threat to world peace and to portray themselves in Western Europe as the peaceful [unintelligible], and to really drive a wedge between the U.S. and our European allies.

GRANT: Well, I'm going to interrupt you for just a moment because, parenthetically, with what you have just said, Admiral Inman, I was reading some of the portions of some of the speeches of some putative presidential candidates who were in Sacramento, California -- Alan Cranston, Walter Mondale, to name two; Gary Hart, to name a third. All three would make it sound -- did make it sound, indeed, that Washington was really the cause of the problems on the arms control talks, not Moscow.

As an American, how does this make you feel?

ADMIRAL INMAN: I worry about the signals that are sent to our friends abroad. And there are so many instances over the last decade where we say so many different things publicly, and it's also rapidly picked up and covered in the news media, that I worry that foreign countries are confused about what our will really is, what our policies really are.

GRANT: Ah-ha.

ADMIRAL INMAN: I'm persuaded that, ultimately, you've got to compromise to get agreements, and that we will have to compromise from some of the positions we started. But you don't start caving in to compromise before you've got some counter-offers and you see a prospect of a bargain which will at least be equitable for you.

So, I don't believe we'll ultimately get arms control agreements unless we are prepared to make some compromises. But you've got to have a good hard line going in, or you're not going

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to get agreement which reasonably protects your interests.

GRANT: So, then, you see nothing wrong with the President's seeming hard line going in.

ADMIRAL INMAN: I think that's -- I think he's a good negotiator. From time to time, I see the signs long before his entry into politics, back to his Screen Actor Guild days. I remember with great clarity an instance when I was still serving in the Administration and there was an intense debate about what the positions ought to be. And the President sort of stopped the heated debate to say, "Why would I want to send negotiators without something to negotiate?"

So I think, indeed, he's properly taking a hard line. But I also believe, at the right time, he'll make smart compromises to get an agreement that serves this country's long-term security interest.

GRANT: One final question. I appreciate your time, Admiral Inman. One final question.

People have asked me, and I pass it on to you because only individuals such as yourself are in a position to really assess the answer. The question is: Why should we spend the money to deploy these mis -- to build these missiles, to ship them, to deploy them, to maintain them? What difference does it make if we don't have any and the Soviets do? They'll never use them anyway. If they did, the whole world would be destroyed. So what difference does it make if they have the missiles or the missile edge and we don't?

Your answer, sir.

ADMIRAL INMAN: The heart of the matter is the perception of our allies and friends about their own security. Do they believe they will be defended by standing up, by continuing free enterprise systems; or do they believe that we lack the capacity to defend them, lack the [technical difficulties] them, and that they therefore should reach accommodations with the Soviets?

GRANT: Very good.

Thank you very much, Admiral Inman.

ADMIRAL INMAN: A great pleasure to talk to you.

GRANT: That's Admiral Bobby Ray Inman. He was the number two man of the CIA. He's only 51 years of age. You may have thought he was older because of some of the things that he

said.

He feels the CIA is being rebuilt, has been rebuilt a great deal since William Casey took over as head of the organization, and is very approving of the President's posture. He says the President is a good negotiator. He also says that we must be careful that we don't send signals to our allies and to other people in the world, send the wrong signals, make them think that we don't have the will to do what must be done to stand up to the Soviet Union.